

PETCO ironically does not treat its animals humanely

by Sofie Gladysheva
Editorial Editor



One lazy Sunday afternoon, my friend and I stopped by our local Petco to pick up some crickets for my companion's chameleon. We walked in and my friend immediately showed me the box of crickets displayed on the Petco shelf for \$4.99. He also showed me that half of the crickets were dead. He explained that one had to ask for crickets from one of the employees so they could retrieve them from the back supply room. We walked around the store

for fifteen minutes, but spotted no one in a blue Petco uniform. Instead, we got side tracked and looked at the birds. Their feathers were dirty and ruffled and they were acting quite strangely, even for birds. The cockatoos looked at us with their heads upside down while smashing them into the cage floor or rolling around on it. I do not know much about birds, and I still do not know if they

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were acting naturally, but the dead crickets and lack of employees were already enough to grab my attention and question Petco as a humane supplier of live animals.

After some research, I learned I was not the only one with concerns about this corporation. A former manager of Petco stores in Novato and San Rafael named Catherine Lindblom sued Petco for sexual harassment, wrongful termination and emotional distress in 2007. She not only had been molested, but had found

neglected and dead animals. The suit revealed that the Petco store housed starving reptiles, guinea pigs eating each other,

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and in a particular case, a dead snake had to be peeled off the bottom of the cage because it had been dead for so long. This seems ridiculous when as recently as just in 2004 Petco was forced to clean up its cages

dirty facilities, and a rabbit being neutered with Chlorox wipes and a dull razor.

The following month, Petco announced that they would decrease their sale of live animals to 30 percent to make room for different products and keep animals for a shorter time in stores. However, a response to PETA's claims about Rainbow World Exotics seems like an appropriate reason to decrease sales as well. While the video might have been manipulated or removed from the right context, there is no doubt that the main motives for both Rainbow World Exotics and Petco is profit.

It is a universally acknowledged truth that many corporation's main objective is to make a profit. Selling animals makes a profit, so Petco continues to do so. Many corporations are cut-throat about bringing in the dough.



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in all California counties, and pay \$850,000 when investigators found malnourished animals and dirty habitats.

When you go to the source, conditions seem no brighter for our furry and scaly friends. Last January, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) confronted Rainbow World Exotics, a major pet supplier to Petco, about their "unwarranted or unjustified pain or suffering" involving animals. Specifically, a video revealed

absent from the floor makes me question if they are performing the necessary care for those animals. Even so, it takes skill to care for animals that are specific to each species.

I prefer to see interested and involved individuals caring for those animals and knowing their particular needs, instead of individuals looking to make discretionary income after school. (Sources: the Marin Humane Society, Kind Planet, PETA)

Prostitution should be legalized to keep prostitutes safe

by Jenny Heath
News Editor



Prostitution. The word generally has a negative connotation, and as a profession, it is and always has been looked down upon. It implies a lack of morals, or mindless promiscuity. It also calls to mind women who have fallen into extreme poverty and have no other choice, which is typically the case.

Prostitutes often have little protection or rights, socially or legally, especially in countries where prostitution is against the law. They are the victims of criminal assault and abuse, and are frequently arrested for their practice. Other dangers of prostitution include health risks such as STDs. Working conditions are generally

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terrible, and wages are not good. Many prostitutes, including most American ones, are forced to work for pimps or brothels, and see little of the money they make. Streetwalkers are more independent, but risk their safety. If raped or harmed, their suffering is often disregarded by the police simply because of their profession.

However, there are situations, in the United States as well as around the world, in which women choose prostitution and other sex work as a profession because it suits them. There are a number of organizations in the US that support and defend those who practice prostitution safely and respectfully. These organizations work with international organizations to decriminalize, and sometimes to legalize the profession. They believe that prostitution should be treated like a job—with safety guidelines, unions, networks, and protection. Sexual health, disease control, education, and contraception are among their top priorities. As stated by

the American Humanist Organization, "...any variety of sexual exploration- as long as it isn't exploitative or harmful- can't be considered evil, yet that is exactly how prostitution is regarded. If a woman or man chooses to exchange sex for money and does it in a way that causes no harm to either party, then they should be free to do so."

Though prostitution will likely never become a profession by preference, prostitutes should at the very least be protected and have rights so that their health and safety are not compromised because of a lack of respect for their line of work. Prostitution has often been called the "world's oldest profession." Judging by its legacy, it is not likely to go away. Therefore, something ought to be done to protect the workers of this business. The entire industry cannot simply be dismissed as abusive and immoral because this does nothing to alleviate the problems that exist within it.

Efforts have been made by governments to eradicate prostitution, but have been largely unsuccessful. Kathleen Peratis, a New York civil rights attorney, commented, "We have, broadly, two choices: We can embark on the fool's errand of eradicating commercial sex, whether by punishing the suppliers and/or the users, making no distinction whatever regarding the circumstances or we can search out and punish coercion, while seeing to it that our response to those who choose 'the life' is humane and that we do not add to their calamities."

One way to do the latter is to legalize prostitution. The term legalization generally refers to a system of government regulation in which prostitutes would be licensed and required to work in specific ways.

According to the International Union of Sex Workers, this often includes special taxes, registration and record keeping, health checks, and restriction of prostitutes to work in certain zones or in brothels.

In addition, a minimum wage could be ensured for prostitutes, so that they would have enough to live on.

One of the most well-known examples of legalized prostitution is that of the Netherlands. As a result of legalization there are harsher punishments for forced prostitution. Also, the concern that brothels would spring up everywhere remains unfounded. Brothels now require a license, and are contained in Red-Light districts. Laws control, regulate, and better prosecute the

exploitation of prostitution, especially that of minors. They also combat the presence of illegal aliens in prostitution (brothel owners can lose their licenses for hiring them) and the criminal affairs linked to prostitution. Streetwalking zones have been designated, allowing prostitutes to function as a community and giving them a safe place to meet with colleagues and talk to health care professionals. In addition, legalization of prostitution has provided a source of revenue for the government.

Part of the reason that the Dutch system works so well is the liberal social attitude towards sex and sex work in the Netherlands. "The tolerance, which we in Amsterdam are proud of, is not the same as indifference," said the former Rector of Maastricht University. People are willing to respect and protect the rights of Dutch prostitutes, allowing the system to function smoothly.

The US needs to change its conservative social attitudes towards prostitution in order to make legalization possible. The necessary amount of respect and cooperation is simply not present at the moment, and would make the system ineffective. However, California, being a more liberal state, might be able to take this step. In addition, countries around the world with more tolerant populations would do well to consider legalizing prostitution. If an effective system were established, regulation could help to ensure the safety, health, and happiness of prostitutes through recordkeeping, minimum wages, health checks, and prosecution of traffickers.

Prostitution is not going away, so why not make something of it? According to Leah Platt, an American Prospect writer, "Sex work is here to stay, and by recognizing it as a paid labor governments can guarantee fair treatment as well as safe and healthy work environments. (Sources: Google News, Electronic Library)



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Red Light District

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